

Up From the Bottoms:

The Search for the American Dream



A documentary that explores the struggles of African Americans as they migrated from the old south to the prosperous north.

Produced by Jim & Rod Schaub - Clear Vision Films



PRESS KIT

"An extraordinary accomplishment for sibling producers Jim and Rod Schaub....I was blown away by the moving reportage."

- BILL IDINGS, THE MUSKEGON CHRONICLE



Narrated by
Cicely Tyson



Dick Gregory



Dr. Ben Wilson



Clear Vision Films
4674 W. Giles Rd., Muskegon, Michigan, 49445
231.288.8291 or 231.288.9417
www.upfromthebottoms.com

Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream



SYNOPSIS

Single Sentence

"Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream" tells the story of the massive migration of African Americans from the rural south to the prosperous north during the World War II years and beyond.

Brief (50 words)

"Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream" tells the story of the massive migration of African Americans from the rural south to the prosperous north during the World War II years and beyond. They left behind the legacy of slavery and segregation and set out to find the american dream.

Medium (125 words)

"Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream" tells the story of the massive migration of African Americans from the rural south to the prosperous north during the World War II years and beyond. They left behind the legacy of slavery and segregation and set out to find the american dream. The voice of Cicely Tyson guides us through these touching, thoughtful and often funny stories as told by fifteen residents of Muskegon, Michigan. During the late 1930's through the 1960's, factory jobs in the north were abundant while farming jobs in the south were disappearing. It started as a trickle but once word got back to families in the south, it turned into a flood of people uprooting their lives and moving to the land of prosperity, the industrial north.

Long (225 words)

"Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream" tells the story of the massive migration of African Americans from the rural south to the prosperous north during the World War II years and beyond. They left behind the legacy of slavery and segregation and set out to find the american dream. The voice of Cicely Tyson guides us through these touching, thoughtful and often funny stories as told by fifteen residents of Muskegon, Michigan. During the late 1930's through the 1960's, factory jobs in the north were abundant while farming jobs in the south were disappearing. It started as a trickle but once word got back to families in the south, it turned into a flood of people uprooting their lives and moving to the land of prosperity, the industrial north.

The producers, Jim & Rod Schaub of Clear Vision Films set out to capture this local story but soon learned that it is just one example of a larger story that happened all across our country. It touches on the vast differences in culture between the north and south and delves into the racial tensions these new immigrants encountered - settling in an area where very few African Americans had lived. The struggles these courageous immigrants went through were numerous but so were the opportunities for starting a new life away from the racist, segregated south. The workers made more money than they ever thought possible. They eventually bought or built homes, raised families and began to see a chance at capturing the American Dream.

Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream



About The Filmmakers



Jim Schaub, Director, Producer, Co-Editor

Jim Schaub has been a producer, editor, writer and technician for 18 years with a wide range of experience in the industry. His recent works include executive producer/producer of *Walter's Wife*, a short film about a troubled marriage as seen through the eyes of a young boy and as editor of *Nightmare in New Guinea: The Men of the Red Arrow*, a World War II documentary about one of the bloodiest fronts of the war. He has worked for numerous corporate and non-profit clients including UPS, Knoll Inc., CBS Sports, The American Lung Association, The United Way and many others. Jim has a film in the permanent collection of **The Metropolitan Museum of Art** in New York called *An Interview with Lou Raynor*, a piece about a master potter and educator. He has an MS degree in communications and two bachelors degrees, one in business and one in film production. Jim works full time at Grand Valley State University as a technician and adjunct professor teaching film editing and special effects. He is currently associate producer of another short film called *The Darkroom*, directed by the Student Academy Award winning Z. Eric Yang.



Rod Schaub, Producer, Music

Rod Schaub has worked in the music and film industries since the mid 1970's earning a gold record for his guitar work on the song "Happy Days". He has composed and performed music for numerous films including *The Gospel According to Roy*, *To Live and Die in Dixie*, *Nightmare in New Guinea: The Men of the Red Arrow* as well as music for many corporate, industrial and non-profit films. He attended both Berklee College of Music and the Boston Conservatory of Music. Rod has worked with such artists as Stevie Wonder, Darius Brubeck, Victor Wooten and Reba Mcintyre. He has composed and performed music on the last three albums from Sony Music's Jamii Szmazdzinski and collaborated with him on music for the Chinese and Malaysian TV show *Romance in the White House*. Rod just completed music for a promotional video for *The Lexicon (the unauthorized Harry Potter dictionary)*. He is a music educator in the Mona Shores School District in Muskegon, Michigan.

Darius Mathis, Director of Photography

Darius Mathis is a producer, cinematographer and director of photography who has worked in the film and video industry for over 14 years. He has a wide range of experience from commercials, corporate and non-profit to short films and experimental. He is an award winning producer and owns **Red September Films**, a full service production company.

James Martin, Researcher, Interviewer

James Martin has many years of experience as a radio and television talk show host. He was instrumental in researching stories and finding interview subjects for the documentary.

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Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I've been asked many times why we chose the topic of African American migration to the north for our film *Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream*. My response to this question mirrors our narrator **Cicely Tyson's**: "I recognized it as historical, and passing on our history to the world is important, especially for children. Our history still is not being taught correctly."

I attended the public schools in the small Michigan town of Muskegon and didn't learn anything about the rich history of how African Americans first settled in our area. Upon hearing some of the stories about "hot beds" and hopping trains or "hoboing", I was shocked that I had never learned about this in school. We set out to help preserve this important part of our local history and in the process realized that this is a part of a larger story that was repeated all across this land.

As my co-producer/brother Rod Schaub and I began talking to people and shooting the interviews, the appreciation and support we received from the community became overwhelming. Many actually seemed surprised that we cared what they had to say and went to so much trouble to record their stories. We were determined to present them with the respect they deserved. We shot the interviews in elegant settings using **High Definition** cameras, taking care to light the people properly and let them tell their stories without an agenda. We interviewed fifteen residents as well as the civil rights activist **Dick Gregory** and the black Americana scholar, **Dr. Ben Wilson**. The result is a powerful story of the struggles and triumphs of a large group of people who chose to venture out in search of a dream, the American dream.

Jim Schaub,
Director

Up From the Bottoms:

The Search for the American Dream



Production Team

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/CO-EDITOR	Jim Schaub
PRODUCER/MUSIC/RESEARCHER	Rod Schaub
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	Darius Mathis
INTERVIEWER/RESEARCHER	James Martin
WRITTEN BY	Jim Schaub and Barbara Roos
EDITED BY	Edward Harrison and Jim Schaub
GAFFER/2ND UNIT DIRECTOR	Andy Fortenbacher
ADDITIONAL GAFFERS	Chris Winston and Aaron Bannasch
GRIP	Chris Winston
ADDITIONAL GRIPS	David Patton and Melissa Bayer
PHOTOGRAPHERS	Kendra Fortenberry and Jim Schaub

Film Details and Specifications

Running Time: 58 minutes

Shooting Format: HDV

Screening Formats: Blu-ray, DVD, Beta SP, DVCAM

Dates of Production: 2007 - 2009

Festival Premiere: Rhode Island International Film Festival 2009

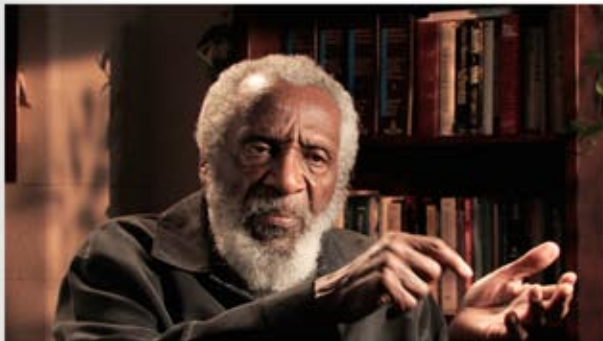
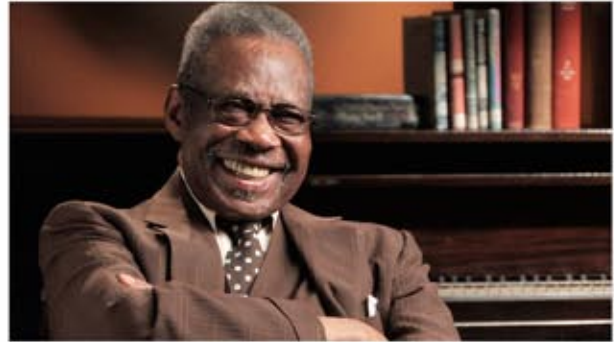
Website/trailer/downloadable press kit: www.upfromthebottoms.com

Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream



Frame Grabs

These and many others are available in high resolution
Contact: info@upfromthebottoms.com



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Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream



Production Stills

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Cicely Tyson



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Local film getting national attention

By Teresa Taylor Williams

ttwilliams@muskegonchronicle.com

MUSKEGON — A documentary about African Americans who emigrated from the south to Muskegon is getting national attention.



Rod Schaub

"Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream" was released in May, and sibling producers Jim and Rod Schaub of Muskegon have been busy distributing it to festivals nationwide.

Only three days after submitting the film, they were notified that the film was selected for the Rhode Island International Film Festival from among 3,400 entries from 57 countries. Only 236 were selected, said Rod Schaub. The festival begins this weekend.



Jim Schaub

"The fact that we were accepted and so early is just phenomenal," said Rod Schaub. "We're getting great feedback local-

ly."

The film tells the story of the massive migration of African Americans from the rural south to the prosperous north (Muskegon) during the war years and beyond.

There is narration by Emmy Award-winning actress Cicely Tyson, and interviews with activist Dick Gregory, and profiles featuring 15 local people, including former Muskegon Heights Mayor Rillastine Wilkins, the late Calvin Churchwell and the late Harold Workman, and Alberta Brown, whose father, Ruby Brown, had owned the Sepia Cafe.

During the 1940s, Bernice Sydnor and her family settled in Muskegon from West Virginia.

"I thought (the film) was marvelous and well told. It's a way for younger people especially to know how it was years ago, because I think a number of them have no idea," said Sydnor, of Muskegon Heights.



Photo • Clear Vision Films

"Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream" tells the story of the massive migration of African Americans from the rural south to the prosperous north during the war years and beyond.

- The next public showing of "Up From the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream" will be at the Michigan Film Festival, 6:30 p.m. Aug. 29 in the Urban Institute for Contemporary Art, 41 Sheldon Boulevard SE, in Grand Rapids. For information, visit www.michiganfilmfest.org.

- The DVD is available at Meijer, Lakeshore Museum, and online at www.upfromthebottoms.com.

In its 13th year, the Rhode Island International Film Festival is the largest of its kind in New England.

Schaub said he is especially grateful for the local musical talents of Lucille Williams, Jeremy Harris, Chandra Harris, and Loretta Robinson. Williams' original song, "Ready to Go," is featured and is creating a buzz among film circles, said Schaub.

It took two years for the brothers and their film crew from Clear Vision Films

to complete the project. Jim Schaub teaches in the School of Communications at Grand Valley State University, which is also one of the sponsors for the documentary. Rod Schaub is a music educator for Mona Shores Public Schools.

What's next for the film? It was shown to various youth this summer at the youth employment program in the McLaughlin Neighborhood, and also in the "Pathways to Freedom" leadership class at Muskegon Heights High School.

This fall, the documentary will be integrated into the curriculum of various schools, including Muskegon Heights, North Muskegon and Mona Shores.

"That was one of the main reasons we did this," said Rod Schaub. "To get this history to kids in schools."

Sponsors of the film include GVSU, Muskegon Area Intermediate School District, Muskegon Chronicle, Institute for Healing Racism, Michigan Humanities Council, Community Foundation for Muskegon County, and individual donations.

Emmy winner Tyson narrates 'Up From the Bottoms'

By Jessica Pawlowski

GVL Senior Reporter

Cicely Tyson, an Emmy Award-winning actress, narrated a Grand Valley State University-sponsored documentary "Up From the Bottoms: African American Migration to Muskegon, Michigan."

The documentary explores the struggles of people from the South who came to Muskegon for industrial jobs and settled in two areas – Muskegon Heights and an area north of downtown Muskegon referred to as "the Bottoms."

Tyson came to Grand Rapids on Oct. 22 to record narration.

"Up From the Bottoms" is being produced and directed by Jim Schaub, an adjunct professor in the School of Communications, and his brother Rod Schaub, both of Clear Vision Films.

Jim said when he first heard about the idea of the film he thought it was interesting, and after researching and talking to people he realized how much it needed to be made.

"It tells a story that even though the focus is on Muskegon, it was repeated all across the country," he said. "Muskegon wasn't the only place people migrated to for jobs. It's a universal story."

He added the community appreciates them taking on the topic, which motivated them to make the film even more.

"It's an exciting project because they were taking something from the ground level, gradually gaining momentum and getting bigger and bigger," said Andy Fortenberry, who did lighting and interviews for the film.

He added Jesse Jackson was among those interviewed.

Work on the film turned out to be an educational experience for the crew.

Schaub, who grew up in Muskegon, said he learned a lot while working on the film.

"I didn't know hardly any of the stories that we've heard (while filming)," he said.

Kendra Fortenberry, a GVSU student who photographed behind-the-scenes production and the people interviewed, said the overall concept of the film taught her something.

"It put in perspective the experiences of African-Americans in the Midwest," she said. "Blacks migrating from the South to Chicago was something I was familiar with, but to be exposed to a film where people migrated from the South to Muskegon put into perspective how similar our experiences can be."

Filming for "Up From the Bottoms" began in February. The documentary is still in the works, and is scheduled to premiere in February 2009 in Muskegon. The film's budget is \$87,000 and about \$30,000 still needs to be collected to complete the

documentary. Donations are welcome.

"I'm looking forward to seeing it finished," Fortenberry said. "I know a lot of other people would benefit from watching the documentary."

Fortenberry agreed.

"Seeing others overcome adversity, whether it be racial or otherwise, is something everyone can benefit from," she said. "Though the film focuses on African-American lives, it involves universal themes – one of which is the desire to do better and achieve more."

The film is part of the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. A division of the Discovery Channel, REMC/MiStreamnet, will distribute it to Michigan schools. A social studies curriculum will be designed including the film and companion materials for middle schools and high schools.

Schaub has also worked on other GVSU-sponsored films including "Nightmare in New Guinea."

Tyson has been in TV shows and movies including "Roots," "The Rosa Parks Story" and "Fried Green Tomatoes," and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actress for the 1972 film "Sounder."

For more information on "Up From the Bottoms" visit <http://www.upfromthebottoms.com>, or call Jim Schaub at (616) 331-3633.

jpawlowski@lanthorn.com



Courtesy Photo / Joseph Marzullo, www.bossip.com

Key voice: Emmy-Award winner Cicely Tyson narrated a documentary sponsored by GVSU.

Muskegon Chronicle Wednesday

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MAKING THE GRADE

Muskegon school board still reviewing raising the minimum GPA for athletes.

Local Region



SOCCER STANDOUTS

Fruitport advances, Grand Haven ousted in shootout.

Sports



Cicely Tyson will narrate a documentary about the African-American migration to Muskegon.

Actress lends her voice to Muskegon documentary

By Clayton Hardiman
chardiman@muskegonchronicle.com

Her voice has helped tell some of the most compelling stories in television and motion picture history — those of an African mother in "Roots," of a 100-year-old former slave in "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," and of a struggling family of sharecroppers in "Sounder."

Now Cicely Tyson's voice is about to help tell Muskegon's.

The award-winning actress was in West Michigan today to record the narration for

"Up From the Bottoms, African American Migration to Muskegon."

The historical documentary, sponsored by Grand Valley State University and produced and directed by Jim and Rod Schaub of Clear Vision Films, explores the struggles of African-Americans who traveled from the South to Muskegon for industrial jobs during World War II.

Through most of her acting career, Tyson has been notably selective about the roles she has taken, turning down lucrative opportunities and choosing mainly projects depicting

strong, positive images of black women.

Tyson said she was drawn to "Up From the Bottoms" for similar reasons.

"I recognized it as historical, and passing on our history to the world is important, especially for children," Tyson said Tuesday, speaking from New York City in a telephone interview. "Our history still is not being taught correctly."

"Up From the Bottoms" draws its name from the history of African-American migrants from the South who, upon arriving in

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the Muskegon area, settled mostly in two areas: Muskegon Heights and a low-lying area north of downtown Muskegon, referred to by some as "the Bottoms."

GVSU students have helped collect oral histories from more than 15 people, now in their 80s, who settled in Muskegon during the World War II era. Interviews and historical footage will be included in the documentary, possibly with re-enactments as well.

"It's truly a tribute to the lives and struggles of these people that Ms. Tyson agreed to lend her voice to this effort," Jim Schaub said.

Schaub teaches in the School of Communications at GVSU. Rod Schaub, Jim's brother and co-director and producer, is a music educator for Mona Shores Public Schools.

Tyson was to record her narration for the film today at a studio in Grand Rapids. At 4:30 p.m., she was to meet on the campus of GVSU in a question-and-answer session with students. The meeting with students will take place in the Kirkhof Center's Pere Marquette Room. The latter event will be free and open to the public, although space is said to be limited.

As an actress, Tyson's work has earned her consistent critical acclaim. In 1972, she received an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress for her work in "Sounder." More than a quarter-century later, she remains one of



Jim Schaub



Rod Schaub

Learn more

For more information about "Up From the Bottoms, African American Migration to Muskegon," or to donate to the documentary's production, visit www.upfromthebottoms.com or call Jim Schaub at (616) 331-3633.

only seven African-American actresses ever to receive such a nomination.

Tyson was the first African-American to win an Emmy for best actress in a television movie for her work in "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman."

She said she remains "surprised and extremely grateful" for the impact her work has had.

"One is not always sure of the impact one makes, but one is hopeful," Tyson said. "You have no way of knowing if it will be effective."

However, sometimes Tyson has been taken aback by the manner in which her impact is communicated. Once, she said, an interviewer told her that before seeing "Sounder," she didn't believe black men and women "could have deep, loving relationships like white people."

"When I regained my composure, I asked her, 'You thought we were less than human?'" Tyson said.

She said the interviewer's defense was that she had not known any black people growing up nor had she attended school with African-Americans.

"Your guilt, for me, lies in your innocence," Tyson said she told the interviewer.

Tyson said she has done a number of historically significant projects like "Up From the Bottoms."

"I truly am grateful when I have the opportunity," she said.

The documentary is part of the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. It will explore the history of people who helped shape the community and culture of the Muskegon area, including the popularity of rhythm-and-blues and jazz clubs in the area. It also will focus on the racial climate of the times.

When finished, the film will have premieres in both Muskegon and Grand Rapids, with panel discussions following some of the screenings. A social studies curriculum for middle and high schools will be designed in connection with the film.

The project has received funding from the university and grants from the Michigan Humanities Council, the Community Foundation for Muskegon and Alcoa Howmet, but additional funding still is needed to complete the project, Rod Schaub said.



File photo

among the 185 foreign species in Tom Matych of Twin Lake proposes arch and walleye to combat the gobies.

y of ideas,

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Filmmakers Jim Schaub and Rod Schaub pose with Cicely Tyson following Ms. Tyson's recording the narration for their historic documentary about African Americans in Michigan.

The Grand Valley-sponsored documentary is being produced and directed by brothers Jim and Rod Schaub of Clear Vision Films. Jim teaches in the School of Communications at Grand Valley and Rod teaches music at Mona Shores Schools in Muskegon.

"I'm happy to be involved in this important project," said Tyson. "It is crucial to preserve and share black history, because it hasn't been taught in the schools."

The film explores the struggles of people from the South, who came to Muskegon MI for industrial jobs related to World War II. They settled mostly in two areas, Muskegon Heights and a low-lying area north of downtown Muskegon, sometimes referred to as "the Bottoms."

Tyson followed her recording session in Grand Rapids on Wednesday with a visit

to the Allendale Campus for a Q&A with about 200 students and community guests. She encouraged today's generation to make the most of their lives and the opportunities gained through the struggles of past generations during the Civil Rights era.

The documentary film is part of the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. It will feature the history of people who helped shaped Muskegon and its culture, including the popularity of R&B and jazz clubs that drew people from outside areas. It will also explore the racial climate of the times.

WDIV Partners with Velocity Cow

Detroit's WDIV-TV4, one of the nation's top rated NBC affiliates, has announced a new commercial production collaboration with Velocity Cow, a newly formed integrated media and production company helmed by Emmy award winning producer Jamie Kaye Walters and acclaimed video editor Michael Sherman. Velocity Cow will collaborate with the WDIV/Local 4 sales department and their clients to develop innovative and high quality television commercials and long form sponsored programming, offering WDIV advertising clients exclusive access to one of the top creative teams in the area.

"This new partnership offers limitless opportunities for WDIV advertising clients who are currently without a creative agency as well as new clients looking to advertise on TV to create the highest quality commercial productions," said Kerry Moylan, VP, director of sales for Post-Newsweek Stations Inc., parent company of WDIV. "Our advertisers will benefit immensely from the creativity of Velocity Cow."

For nearly a decade, Walters, a three time Michigan EMMY Award recipient, produced

Professor highlights black migration in film

Jim Schaub features interviews, historical footage, reenactments in 'Up from the Bottoms'

By Brandy Arnold
GVL A & E Editor

When blacks migrated from the South to the North in the early 20th century, many of them went to larger cities such as Detroit and Chicago — but many also relocated to right here in West Michigan.

Through his documentary, Grand Valley State University film and video professor Jim Schaub hopes to share the stories of these people. "Up from the Bottoms: African American Migration to Muskegon, Michigan," will feature interviews mixed with historical footage and reenactments.

"It was urgent we do it right away," Schaub said. "The people are in their 80s right now and their stories are passing with them."

Working on the film with Jim is co-producer and brother Rob Schaub in addition to School of Communication students and alumni. The SOC and Department of History will do research for the film. GVSU was recently awarded grants of \$5,000 from the Community Foundation for Muskegon

County, \$5,000 from Alcoa Howmet and \$15,000 from the Michigan Humanities Council for the documentary.

"If it weren't for them, the project wouldn't be funded," Jim said. "It's definitely a great start."

The Bottoms, the film's inspiration, is a low-lying area near Jackson Hill in Muskegon, Jim said. Black men would hop trains to Michigan looking for jobs and would then send for their families when they found work. Often they had no where to live. Multiple families lived in shacks, slept in railroad cars and shared beds, he added.

"We're told the beds were always warm because when one person got up to start their shift another would take their place," Jim said. "There were these one-room apartments and people were just stacked on top of each other."

While The Bottoms is one specific area where these situations occurred, he said the documentary will examine all of Muskegon. Jim grew up in the city and never learned anything about this experience while in school, he said.

"Someone needed to document this," he added.

So far Jim has interviewed eight people and he said they have all been extremely humble.

"They all say 'Oh my story's not important,' and then they start telling it and you're like 'What are you talking about? That's amazing,'" he said. "We are blown away by these experiences."

However, some are shy — whether it be due to the camera or because of an underlying fear of retaliation stemming from past violence they have experienced.

"This has been the case with few people, but it's still there," he said.

Jim and his crew want to interview about 30 people. They hope to be done with the interviews by June 1 and are shooting for a November premiere.

Interviewees from the film will be at the premiere to answer any questions, and there will also be a panel discussion. The film will be used in the Muskegon school system, and perhaps in state and nationwide schools as well.

GVSU junior Chris Winston is a crew member working on the project. The film/video student assists with the cinematography and sets up various equipment for interviews.

Winston, of Southfield, Mich., said working on the project has been helpful for his career as he works with professionals to learn the "tricks of the



Sandor



Brown



Courtesy Photo / Amanda Pitts

Big money: Jim Schaub receives a grant check for the documentary.

trade."

It has also been an eye-opening experience, he added.

"One of the ladies was talking about how bad conditions were when they first got up here, but they were better than what they had dealt with in the South," he said. "I thought it was so interesting. I didn't even know there had been a large African-American population in Muskegon then."

Winston said the woman's message ended on an uplifting note.

"She was still so positive and she said you can do anything you want, you just have to have the will to do it," he said. "It's important to know how groups who are in a certain place got there, and it's important for all people to know their heritage."

arts@lanthorn

6A Local • Region

MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2009 • Muskegon Chronicle

'Up From the Bottoms: African American Migration to Muskegon, Michigan'

What: A historical documentary retelling the story of African Americans who traveled from the South to Muskegon for industrial jobs during the World War II era.



Narrator: Actress and humanitarian Cicely Tyson.

Needed: Committee members say about \$25,000 in donations is needed to complete the project.

To donate: Visit the project Web site at www.upfromthebottoms.com and click on the tab labeled "DONATE."

Migration documentary in need of support

By Clayton Hardiman
chardiman@muskegonchronicle.com

MUSKEGON — Most of the stories have been told. A majority of the interviews are in the can.

But members of a film documentary project, who are retelling the story of the long migration that helped change the face of Muskegon, say they still could use a helping hand.

As it nears the finish line, the project "Up From the Bottoms: African American Migration to Muskegon, Michigan" is in need of donations, said Rodney Schaub, one of the organizers of the project.

Schaub, who is producing and directing the documentary with his brother, Jim, said

the film's editing and music score still must be completed.

A few additional interviews must be filmed, and a venue needs to be rented for the film's premiere.

Filmmakers also plan to screen the documentary at a couple of prestigious film festivals — the Los Angeles Film Festival and the Discovery Channel's SilverDocs Film Festival in Washington, D.C.

"We really need about \$25,000," Schaub said.

The documentary explores the struggles of African Americans who migrated from the

South to Muskegon for industrial jobs during and around the time of World War II.

The documentary draws its name from the history of those migrating workers who, upon arriving in the Muskegon area, settled mostly in two areas: Muskegon Heights and a low-lying area north of downtown Muskegon that some have referred to as "The Bottoms."

The documentary is sponsored by Grand Valley State University and is being produced and directed by Clear Vision Films, the Schaub brothers' film company. Jim Schaub teaches in the School of Communications at GVSU. Rodney Schaub is a music educator for Mona Shores Public Schools.



R. Schaub



J. Schaub

The story also will feature voice work by award-winning actress Cicely Tyson, who came to West Michigan in October to record her narration for the film.

The project has received

grant support from the Michigan Humanities Council, the Community Foundation for Muskegon County and Alcoa Howmet.

But the project also has received nonmonetary community support, including in-kind donations and research assistance, Schaub said.

Run time for the film is planned at around 56 minutes, which Schaub characterized as "PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) length."

The total cost of the project will weigh in at around \$85,000 — pretty cheap for a good movie," Schaub said.

Filmmakers had planned to complete the project by March 1, but "if we don't get funds in, we'll complete it by May," Schaub said.

FORUM

Monday, October 27, 2008

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Published by News & Information Services

'Roots' actress narrates Grand Valley documentary

Emmy Award-winning actress Cicely Tyson will narrate the Grand Valley documentary, "Up From the Bottoms: African American Migration to Muskegon, Michigan."

Tyson's credits include "Roots," "The Rosa Parks Story," "Fried Green Tomatoes," and countless other movies and TV shows. Tyson is particularly known for her loyalty to only portraying strong, positive images of black women. She earned two Emmys for her 1974 portrayal of a 110-year-old former slave in "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman."

Tyson was on campus October 22 for the project and to meet with students.

The Grand Valley-sponsored documentary is being produced and directed by brothers Jim and Rod Schaub of Clear Vision Films. Jim is a faculty member in the School of Communications and Rod is a music educator at Mona Shores Schools in Muskegon.

"We couldn't be happier to have Ms. Tyson involved in this important project," said Jim Schaub. "It is truly a tribute to the lives and struggles of these people that Ms. Tyson

agreed to lend her voice to this effort."

The film explores the struggles of people from the South who came to Muskegon for industrial jobs during

World War II. They settled mostly in two areas, Muskegon Heights and a low-lying area north of downtown Muskegon, sometimes referred to as "the Bottoms."

"We've heard amazing stories about the challenges they faced moving into this new area,



Photo by Bernadine Carey-Tucker

Cicely Tyson narrates a documentary about African Americans who moved to Muskegon for jobs during World War II.

far away from their homes in the South," said Schaub.

The documentary film is part of the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. It will feature the history of a group of people who helped shaped that community and its culture, and also explore the racial climate of the times.

In addition to capturing and preserving this important segment of history, the film serves as a tremendous learning tool. Grand Valley students have helped to collect oral histories from people, now in their 80s, who settled in Muskegon. Interviews, historical footage and possible reenactments will be included in the documentary. When finished, the film will be premiered in Muskegon and Grand Rapids. REMC/MiStreamnet, a division of the Discovery Channel, will distribute the finished documentary to schools throughout Michigan.

Filmmakers have received grants and funding from Grand Valley, Michigan Humanities Council, Community Foundation for Muskegon and Alcoa Howmet.

Actress urges young blacks to further civil rights cause

'There's nothing you cannot do, and you're not doing anything,' Cicely Tyson says

BY SUE MERRELL

THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

ALLENDALE — Speaking Wednesday at Grand Valley State University, Emmy Award-winning actress Cicely Tyson challenged black young people to take up the baton of the civil rights movement by making something of themselves.

"You need to get out of your own way and do something with your life — for yourself, your race and humanity," the 74-year-old actress said in the scolding tone of a school marm.

"I feel guilty having been part of the civil rights era," she told the room of about 200 students and community guests. "We gained what you have today and this generation has nothing left to fight for. It's difficult for you to understand there were places we couldn't eat. We couldn't ride in the front of the bus, but you can. There's nothing you cannot do, and you're not doing anything."

Tyson's remarks came at the conclusion of a 45-minute Q&A session that touched on her career of 50 years in stage, film and television as well as her childhood and volunteer work as an ambassador to Africa for UNICEF.

Before Tyson arrived, the audience viewed about 30 minutes of clips from her best-known works, including the television miniseries "Roots" and "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman" and films "Fried Green Tomatoes," "Diary of a Mad Black Woman" and "Madea's Family Reunion."

Tyson was welcomed with a



PRESS PHOTO/KATY BATDORFF

Emmy winner: Cicely Tyson poses for cameras before answering questions for Grand Valley State University students Wednesday evening. Tyson is involved in a film project there.

standing ovation and the crowd rose again to applaud at the end of her comments. Wearing sunglasses to protect her eyes from bright lights, she posed for a few quick photos at the beginning of her talk and then insisted all cameras be put away.

The New York actress is visiting West Michigan to record the narration for "Up from the Bottoms: African American Migration to Muskegon, Michigan," a documentary being sponsored by the university.

Directed by Jim and Rod Schaub of Clear Vision Films, the movie is expected to be released in the spring and distributed to schools in the state.

"I never thought I'd live to see a black man running for president, but it's here," Tyson said, and the largely black crowd applauded. "That proves it," she continued. "There is nothing you can't do."

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She brought history to life

In the end, she guilt-tripped them, like a disgruntled mother. And they gave her a standing ovation for it.

She talked about the civil rights struggle and how much had been accomplished — and how little they had done with the gains people bought with their blood.



Clayton Hardiman

A price had been paid, she told them — and what had they done with it?

And the people she was scolding, the students who had come for this, got to their feet and applauded.

Last week actress Cicely Tyson came to

West Michigan to record her narration for "Up From the Bottoms," a historical documentary about the World War II-era migration of African-Americans from the South to Muskegon. Later, she took some of her time to hold a conversation with a room full of students at GVSU.

Afterward, I listened to the reactions of the students as they left.

"I was spellbound," I heard one of them say. "She had me from the beginning."

Before she came out to speak, we got a sample of her work. Call it Cicely 101. Pieces of her award-winning acting career cycled before us on the classroom screen.

First there was "Roots," the groundbreaking television miniseries based on Alex Haley's book. There was Tyson playing the role of an African mother, those luminous eyes brimming with tears at the news that her son had been kidnapped into slavery.

There she was screaming in agony, as so many African mothers must have screamed, tortured by the knowledge that her offspring had been stolen away to another world and she would never see him again.

Then it was "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," a historic television movie from 1974 that earned Tyson a pair of Emmys. Now the magic of makeup had transformed her into a centenarian, whose unlikely life spanned all the way from slavery to the civil rights movement.

There she was, giving up her son again.

This time, she was encouraging her son to contribute his leadership in the civil rights struggle, to make the sacrifices that needed to be made.

Then she aged in reverse, the decades dropping from her face. Now we had arrived in the 21st century, and you could hear the young people in the room sigh an "oooh" of recognition. Now Tyson was in a pair of Tyler Perry movies, where melodrama plays tag with over-the-top humor.

Now she was someone's mother, preaching to the young folks, telling them to "take your place."

And then she was standing before us in person.

She told us she didn't see herself as beautiful. She said she didn't think of herself as famous. She told us that sometimes you succeed through sheer instinct, and that, by the way, is what raw talent is — finding a way to succeed.

To some of us, she will always be an icon, even though she doesn't see herself that way. Physically diminutive, she will always be a towering figure. She will always be Rebecca, the heroic mother of the struggling family in "Sounder." She will always be Miss Jane Pittman, even though Pittman is fictional and Tyson is all too real.

And she will always be Myrtle from Tyler Perry's "Madea's Family Reunion," preaching to the young people, telling them to take their place.

You can do anything you want, she told the students in the room. Martyrs, she told them, bought your freedom at a price.

And in the end, they applauded

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